

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 CU-02 SAJ-01

BIB-01 SAM-01 OMB-01 /057 W
----- 094992

R 191650Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 315

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 6883

E.O. 11652 XGDS-4

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: AUTHORITIES PRESSURE NON-CONFORMIST ARTISTS

REF: MOSCOW 6064

USIA FOR IBS, IEE

1. SUMMARY. AUTHORITIES ARE BEGINNING TO HARASS MOSCOW NON-CONFORMIST ARTISTS IN CONNECTION WITH PLANNED OUTDOOR ART SHOW IN LENINGRAD. TOUGH ARTICLE WHICH DEPICTS ARTISTS AS ALLIES OF "IDEOLOGICAL ENEMIES" APPEARED IN MOSCOW PARTY PAPER. AUTHORITIES MAY FEEL TIME IS RIPE TO FURTHER DISPERSE ARTISTS' GROUP, WITH MINIMUM OF DAMAGE TO SOVIET IMAGE. ARTISTS' OPINIONS ON FURTHER STEPS VARY, WITH SOME IN FAVOR OF CHALLENGING REGIME, OTHERS ADVOCATING RESTRAINT. ANOTHER CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ARTISTS AND REGIME IS POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL MOSCOW SOURCES, SOVIET AUTHORITIES ARE BEGINNING TO APPLY PRESSURE TO NONCONFORMISTS ARTIST IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR OUTDOOR ART EXHIBIT IN LENINGRAD PLANNED FOR MAY 24-25 (REFTEL PARA 5). ONE OF ARTISTS' GROUPS LEADERS, OSKAR RABIN, TOLD EMBOFF MAY 19 THAT OVER WEEKEND HE HAD BEEN CALLED INTO MILITIA OFFICE WHERE "KGB MAN" HAD WARNED HIM AND
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HIS CLLEAGUES TO DROP PLANS TO EXHIBIT IN LENINGRAD. RABIN SAID

HIS SON HAD ALSO RECEIVED PHONE CALL FROM UNIDENTIFIED MAN WHO THREATENED TO "KILL HIM" IF HE TRAVELLED TO LENINGRAD. RABIN SAID OTHER MOSCOW UNOFFICIAL ARTISTS WERE ALSO BEING CALLED IN AND THREATENED BY "KGB." HE STATED THAT GROUP OF ARTISTS INVOLVED IN SETTING UP LENINGRAD EXHIBIT WOULD COME TO MOSCOW IN NEXT FEW DAYS AND THAT GENERAL MEETING OF ARTISTS WOULD BE HELD TO DECIDE WHETHER TO GO ON WITH SHOW AS PLANNED. RABIN'S OPINION WAS THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO HOLD EXHIBIT IN SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE AND THAT ARTISTS WOULD PROBABLY DECIDE TO CANCEL IT UNTIL CONDITIONS WERE "MORE NORMAL."

3. COINCIDING WITH AUTHORITIES' HARASSMENT OF ARTISTS WAS LONG, TOUGH ARTICLE ON MAY 17 MOSKOVSKAYA PRAVDA REVIEWING NON-CONFORMIST ART EXHIBIT AT BEEKEEPING PAVILION LAST FEBRUARY. ARTICLE ENTITLED "THERE IS NO THIRD WAY," ATTACKS "AVANTGARDE" ARTISTS FOR ANTI-SOCIAL, ANTI-HUMAN, ANTI-MAXIST CONTENT OF THEIR PICTURES AND PUTS SUCH ARTS SHOWS IN POLITICAL CONTEXT OF "STRUGGLE OF TWO IDEOLOGIES, COMMUNIST AND BOURGEOIS." ARTISTS ARE DEPICTED AS "CHARLATANS" ADVERTISING THEMSELVES AS "UNRECOGNIZED GENIUSES" TO WEST, WHERE BOURGEOIS PROPAGANDISTS ARE TRYING TO FIND WAYS OF UNDERMINING SOVIET IDEOLOGY. AS PROOF OF COLLUSION BETWEEN ARTISTS AND WESTERN IDEOLOGICAL ENEMIES, ARTICLE NOTES SUPPORT FOR NON-CONFORMIST ARTISTS BY WESTERN DIPLOMATS AND JOURNALISTS. IN THREATENING TONE, ARTICLE STATES THAT THERE IS NO THIRD WAY (I.E., MIDDLE GROUND) BETWEEN MARXIST AND BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY AND DECLARES THAT ART EXHIBITS WHICH PROMOTE "HOSTILE IDEOLOGY" ARE NOT NECESSARY.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE WERE FEW WARNINGS THAT AUTHORITIES WOULD APPLY SUCH PRESSURE TO NON-CONFORMIST ARTISTS, IT SEEMS THAT DECISION HAS FINALLY BEEN TAKEN TO STOP TREATING THEM WITH KID GLOVES. ONE ELEMENT IN AUTHORITIES' DECISION MAY BE FACT THAT ARTISTS' GROUP ITSELF IS DIVIDED, WITH SOME ADVOCATING MORE, SOME LESS, ACTIVITY. AUTHORITIES MAY FEEL TIME IS RIPE TO SPLIT THEM FURTHER BY SCARE TACTICS. ANOTHER FACTOR, IN LINE WITH VIEW OF SOME POLITICAL DISSIDENTS (REFTEL PARA 4), MAY BE THAT SECURITY OFFICIALS FEEL THEY CAN NOW GET AWAY WITH TOUGHER INTERNAL POLICIES WITHOUT DOING COUNTRY'S IMAGE TOO MUCH PERMANENT DAMAGE IN WEST. SINCE OPINIONS VARY AMONG ARTISTS AS TO WHETHER THEY SHOULD BE FORECEFUL OR PATIENT WHEN FACED WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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REGIME PRESSURE, POSSIBILITY OF NASTY CONFRONTATION, PERHAPS AS EARLY AS NEXT WEEK IN LENINGRAD, CONTINUES TO EXIST.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HARASSMENT, ARTISTS, CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MOSCOW06883
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X4
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750175-1074
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750539/aaaabjge.tel
Line Count: 110
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MOSCOW 6064
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 JUN 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <22 OCT 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AUTHORITIES PRESSURE NON-CONFORMIST ARTISTS
TAGS: PINT, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006